

GSA Records Management Seminar

VITAL RECORDS

1. Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank Ed, for your introduction
2. I am particularly pleased to be with you this morning to discuss Vital Records. It gives me an opportunity to repay, partially, Dr. Angel and Dr. Alldredge for some of the many favors I have received from them.

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Someone is spreading a story about a Texas Millionaire who had so much money he didn't know what to do with it. So--he microfilmed it.

3. In this seminar on Records Management you have learned that we must deal with managing paper in all its stages--while it is being created - when it is used and in its final preservation or destruction. Where does Records Management begin? Actually, it is like drawing a circle - you can start anywhere, and one part is as important as every other part. No records management program is complete until it includes all phases of the paperwork problem. I consider Vital Records an important and integral part in any successful records program. In our own organization, Vital Records probably was first because of circumstances.

4. Each Federal Agency is responsible by Executive Order of the President for establishing and maintaining an active Vital Records Program. The office of Emergency Planning has over-all responsibility to establish standards and to coordinate the Federal Programs. The MARS of GSA is responsible for the reporting, procedural and promotional aspects of the program. (HB) Semi-annual reports of the status of each Agency vital records program must be submitted to MARS. GSA was given broader responsibility by E011093 in of this year.

The OEP also has broad responsibility in the over-all field of Emergency Planning as it concerns the various State Civil Defense Programs and even those in industry. Thus, you can see that this is a national plan to coordinate the Federal, State and Municipal Governments and Industry in carrying out an effective Program for emergency operations.

5. The Workshop on Vital Records that will be presented to you today is divided into three Parts - Part I is a general discussion on the objectives and the procedures for establishing and operating an Agency Program - Part II is a discussion on the specific programs of some Federal Agencies and industrial concerns and Part III illustrates through the medium of a very fine movie the part a municipal Government undertakes in carrying out its obligation to protect the lives of individual citizens in a national disaster. As each portion of the Workshop is completed, there will be an opportunity for discussion and questions.

6. [ ] has been a member of our Records Management Staff for over ten years. During this time [ ] has worked in every phase of records management but he has devoted a greater percentage of his time to vital records research. Here is [ ]

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Recently, I read that a half million scientists are at work in the world today churning out new facts that doubles the worlds scientific knowledge every 8 years. About one million research papers are published every year, in 100,000 technical journals in many languages. We are particularly concerned about scientific data today. The amount of time spend in Research for Scientific data, therefore should not be jeopardized by the possibility of losing valuable data through disasters. This is one reason why a vital records program is so important.

The vital records program should be More than a scheme for placing records in cold storage until they may be needed; the program can be the key to numerous improvements in data handling and data keeping - it can be the catalyst for the complete re-design of an information system. It can be the means to effect important economies in paperwork.

Sometimes I am asked where we should start a records management program. It's like drawing a circle - wherever you start one part is dependent upon the other and it does/t make any difference where you start. However, I believe that Vital Records was actually the beginning of our Agency records program; it was our catalyst too, and we consider Vital Records to be an important part of our program today.

A comptroller of a large industrial concern recently showed his vital records program to a group of important visitors; they were most impressed by the small number of papers selected for storage and by the simple method for keeping the system current - a daily change sheet - but what interested the visitors most was this statement of the comptroller.

"This is the best thing that ever happened to me. For the first time

I really know the status of our records. And for

the first time I have all of the essential information in one report, I don't have to shuffle through a lot of papers to get the picture." He used the catalyst approach - the results were evident.